

WE CLAIM:

1. A method for forming an integrated circuit structure, comprising the steps of:
 - 5 providing a substrate having a semiconductor surface;
 - forming an oxygen-containing layer on said semiconductor surface; then subsequently
 - forming a uniform nitrogen distribution throughout said oxygen-containing layer; and subsequently
 - 10 re-oxidizing said layer by a rapid anneal step in an oxidizer and hydrogen mixture of N₂O and H₂ for stabilizing the nitrogen distribution [**at minimum oxidation rate**], healing plasma-induced damage,
 - 15 and reducing interfacial defect density.
2. The method according to Claim 1 wherein said oxygen-containing layer is an ultra-thin silicon dioxide layer in the thickness range from 0.6 to 2.0 nm.
3. The method according to Claim 1 wherein said oxygen-containing layer is an oxynitride layer.
- 20 4. The method according to Claim 1 wherein said step of forming an oxide is a rapid thermal oxidation.
5. The method according to Claim 1 wherein said anneal steps comprise 5 to 60 s at 800 to 1050 °C in N₂O/H₂,
25 flowing at 1 to 20 standard liters/min at 2 to 50 Torr.
6. The method according to Claim 5 wherein said N₂O/H₂ mixture contains 0.5 to 30 % [**(preferred 1 %)**] H₂ with the balance N₂O.
7. The method according to Claim 1 wherein said oxidizer and hydrogen mixture comprises NO and H₂, or O₂ and H₂.
- 30 8. **(CANCELED)** The method according to Claim 1 wherein said reduced

WE CLAIM:

1. A method for forming an integrated circuit structure,
comprising the steps of:
 - 5 providing a substrate having a semiconductor
 surface;
 forming an oxygen-containing layer on said
 semiconductor surface; then subsequently
 forming a uniform nitrogen distribution throughout
10 said oxygen-containing layer; and subsequently
 re-oxidizing said layer by a rapid anneal step in an
 oxidizer and hydrogen mixture of N₂O and H₂ for
 stabilizing the nitrogen distribution, healing
 plasma-induced damage, and reducing interfacial
15 defect density.
2. The method according to Claim 1 wherein said oxygen-
containing layer is an ultra-thin silicon dioxide layer
in the thickness range from 0.6 to 2.0 nm.
3. The method according to Claim 1 wherein said oxygen-
20 containing layer is an oxynitride layer.
4. The method according to Claim 1 wherein said step of
forming an oxide is a rapid thermal oxidation.
5. The method according to Claim 1 wherein said anneal
steps comprise 5 to 60 s at 800 to 1050 °C in N₂O/H₂,
25 flowing at 1 to 20 standard liters/min at 2 to 50 Torr.
6. The method according to Claim 5 wherein said N₂O/H₂
mixture contains 0.5 to 30 % H₂ with the balance N₂O.
7. The method according to Claim 1 wherein said oxidizer
and hydrogen mixture comprises NO and H₂, or O₂ and H₂.
- 30 9. The method according to Claim 1 wherein said integrated

circuit structure includes a transistor having a conductive gate structure disposed on a gate dielectric layer;

wherein said dielectric layer, after annealing and re-oxidizing, forms said gate dielectric layer; and further comprising the step of: forming said conductive gate structure upon said gate dielectric layer.

10. The method according to Claim 9 wherein said conductive gate is comprised of doped poly-silicon.

11. The method according to Claim 9 wherein said gate dielectric is an ultra-thin silicon dioxide layer.

12. The method according to Claim 9 further comprising the steps of forming source and drain and their respective contact to complete said transistor.

13. The method according to Claim 1 wherein said integrated circuit structure includes a capacitor having a capacitor dielectric; and further comprising the steps of:

forming a first electrode over said substrate, said semiconductor surface present at said first electrode; and

forming a second electrode on said dielectric layer; wherein said dielectric layer forms said capacitor dielectric.

14. An integrated circuit having a component as produced by the method of Claim 1.

15. The circuit according to Claim 14 wherein said component is a transistor.

16. The circuit according to Claim 14 wherein said component is a capacitor.